

were narrowed and the pace slowed. A praiseworthy attempt to escape from the two usual literary solitudes imposed by two separate languages might have been further enhanced by a more selective and detailed dissection of certain themes. What does the French writers' commitment to the Reform cause, compared to an almost even split of Tory, Reform, and unknown among English writers, tell us about the prevailing political cultures? Was the strong European influence among both linguistic groups being softened at all by an American influence, particularly in Upper Canada, as Allan Smith has suggested? Do we need more careful analysis of how the Native peoples were portrayed, and was racism at work in both languages? In terms of the period covered, is the 1850 cutoff valid in view of the intellectual coming of age in the immediate pre-Confederation period?

MacDonald's conclusions, like the entire work, are carefully balanced and far from startling. Her writers reflect clearly their urban middle-class worlds and espouse, for the most part, the attitudes and morals of a stable conservative society. While one hopes for a more penetrating analysis, perhaps even an application or at least a consideration of Ian McKay's neo-Gramscian approach to cultural history, such is not forthcoming. Nonetheless, it is clearly established that at times literary attitudes did diverge "along the lines of language and nationality" (p. 258). As well, immigrant English writers and native-born writers in English sometimes parted company, while there were on certain issues "similarities in attitudes of the Canadian-born of both language groups" (p. 263). In general, MacDonald's broad view and approach do occasionally lead to some convincing qualifications of the work of literary specialists while "accepted historical interpretations of this period", as she admits, are confirmed (p. 263). Despite the notoriety of her publisher, the Edwin Mellen Press, which has been much chastised in periodicals such as *Lingua franca*, it is worthwhile to see this study in book form. It is a commendable attempt to deepen our understanding of the historical context of French- and English-Canadian literature in this early period and does indeed, as the author hoped, develop themes which deserve further study and analysis.

W. G. Godfrey  
Mount Allison University

Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis — *Firing the Heather: The Life and Times of Nellie McClung*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1993. Pp. xv, 336.

This long-awaited book cannot have been easy to write. Anyone working in the field of Canadian women's history is familiar with the life of McClung, perhaps the most famous Canadian woman of her time. Thus there are many readers who already believe they know Nellie and will be examining this study to see whether it supports their own preconceived notions. Much of our familiarity comes from her two autobiographies *Clearing in the West* and *The Stream Runs Fast*. McClung's own writing in these two books, especially in the former, is so vibrant that it creates a challenge for any biographer to measure up. In addition, the personal journals

which McClung kept for many years were destroyed after her death, which, as the two authors acknowledge, means that much of what we know about McClung's early years comes through her own memories. For the years after she became a public figure, other documentation supplements the autobiographies.

The task facing the authors is thus twofold: to provide a book that will satisfy both readers who are familiar with McClung's life and want new insights, and readers for whom McClung is an unknown figure. For the former, reading *Firing the Heather* is analogous to reacquainting yourself with an old friend, hearing of old times and new, but essentially substantiating your opinion of her. For the latter, the book will be an introduction to one of Canada's most popular writers and one of our foremost suffragists and reformers; it is a breath of fresh air. Because of the loss of the journals, the authors had no choice but to write a "life and times" biography — a public, not a private one. Nonetheless, McClung's public life was so rich and bound up with so many of the significant themes of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian experience that this public biography will be required reading.

Nellie Mooney McClung was born in 1873 in Grey County, Ontario. Like many Ontario families at this time, the Mooneys could not provide for all their children and looked to the west for a future. The decision to move was taken not by the "head" of the family, as in most families, however, but by the eldest son and by McClung's mother, who was determined not to allow her family to be separated. The family moved to rural Manitoba, and consequently pioneer experience shaped McClung's childhood and adolescence. These years became source material for much of her writing and allowed her to speak for rural women in an authentic voice.

It would appear that at an early age McClung loved the spotlight, a characteristic that she never outgrew although her mother tried to curb her exuberance. Indeed, for modern-day readers it is this aspect that has always been McClung's attraction. Other women might have accomplished as much, but it is McClung's energy and her irreverence, her willingness to see the humour in situations, that speak across the decades. Her childhood was not idyllic but it was emotionally secure and it provided her with a sense of who she was. The authors note aspects of her childhood that future historians might consider exploring, for they are certainly not specific to McClung. For example, the role of animals on a farm went far beyond their usefulness. As pets they gave solace and companionship, and they shaped views of nature. The theme of the female tomboy is another, which literary analysts have studied but which historians have generally ignored.

In some respects, McClung's life was not unlike that of many young women. In her mid-teens she finished her schooling, went to Normal School, and at the age of 17 began six years of teaching. During these years she learned some vital lessons. She always had been a staunch temperance advocate but she realized very early that teaching people about the evils of alcohol was not enough. One had to provide people with the "will" to change. She believed that one could best do this not through the mind but through the heart. People's emotions had to be involved. This was a lesson which readers can see reflected in her writings — emotion is her "hook".

During these years, she worked out her own religious beliefs, as did many people. They were not always doctrinally sound, but they worked for her, and it could be argued that they were part of the feminization of religion which was then occurring. As well, these years saw her desire to write become stronger. Like many women, however, she also fell in love. McClung feared that marriage would eliminate her chance to develop her writing skills and agonized over her decision to marry. She did not reject marriage but did make it clear to Wes McClung that she had to write. Having been brought up by a mother who was a strong supporter of women's rights, Wes had no difficulty accepting Nellie's need for independence, to be a person in her own right. Of course, that they could afford domestic help eased the situation, a fact McClung always conceded.

Much of *Firing the Heather* traces McClung's public life — her early efforts at writing and her eventual success in this endeavour. It details her successful involvement in public speaking. Like many well-known "celebrities" she was very much part of the lecture circuit and made considerable money from it. Her involvement in the women's suffrage movement in Manitoba and later in Alberta after the McClungs moved there is a familiar story and is described well. The authors point out that the attempt to pigeonhole McClung as an equal rights feminist or a maternal feminist is doomed to failure. As was true for many Canadian women, she was both. Canadian women reformers were generally pragmatic; while dissecting their arguments is an interesting exercise, it does not always illuminate what they actually believed or felt. What is interesting is the reaction to women such as McClung. Hallet and Davis point out that criticisms of the time she spent on the lecture circuit and away from her family (and in the eyes of some, neglecting her family) did not emerge until she spoke out on political issues. As long as she gave public readings from her fiction alone, her separation from her family was not an issue. Only when she entered the political arena did she provoke criticism.

There is no doubt that the two authors of this book admire Nellie. They appreciate and stress her uniqueness. They detail, for example, her tour of the United States during the war in support of suffrage. What is interesting is again not what she said, but American reactions to her. Many sensed that McClung was different from other suffragists, and it is this difference which historians have often overlooked. Historians have criticized her for advocating the enfranchisement of only British and Canadian-born women as a war measure and have seen in this proof of her racism. It may be, but, if so, the racism was a temporary phenomenon. She was always sympathetic to immigrants to Canada and, as the authors point out, in her own fiction, immigrants are often depicted in a much more favourable light than Canadian or British-born characters. She supported the enfranchisement of Japanese Canadians even when her party was against it, and she believed that Canada should have been willing to take in Jewish refugees in the 1930s. While she may not have gone as far as some would have liked, she certainly went further than most Canadians.

While McClung's reform activities are well known, less familiar are her writings and their popularity. One of the most intriguing parts of the book is the chapter on her fiction. The authors respond to the dismissal of her work by literary critics.

They point out that, when women writers are considered, McClung will have to be among the major names in Canadian fiction. She was not a romantic writer but one who saw a dark side of life, although her own optimism could not resist happy endings. These endings aside, her books deal with issues which could easily reflect present-day concerns: violence against women, especially domestic violence, child battering, racial prejudice, illegitimacy, unwed motherhood, and abuse of animals, to name only a few. The point made by the authors is that her writings deserve closer attention. What *Firing the Heather* does is to make the reader want to know more about this extraordinary woman. For those who already felt they knew her, she was a pleasure to rediscover.

Wendy Mitchinson  
University of Waterloo

Barry Ferguson — *Remaking Liberalism: The Intellectual Legacy of Adam Shortt, O. D. Skelton, W. C. Clark, and W. A. Mackintosh, 1890–1925*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. Pp. xv, 303.

The author is a talented historian at the University of Manitoba who always has something worthwhile to say. This study of Canadian political ideas arises from his doctoral dissertation at Queen's University. It is a graceful and insightful examination of the intellectual development and offerings of four leading political economists at Queen's. Their scholarship, Barry Ferguson argues, applied and elaborated on the new liberalism developed in Great Britain and the United States and was central to the emergence of the social sciences and the modern university in Canada. The four men steered debates about Canadian nationalism in the decade of nationalism: the 1920s. Their active participation as senior bureaucrats and consultants in the civil service supported Canada's shift to a "positive welfare state" in the 1930s and 1940s, although, as he admits, they ultimately provided little in the way of lasting influence in the public realm.

Given the cast of characters, the institutional setting, and the author's assumptions about the development of the Canadian state and its ideological underpinnings, this is a conservative study. It opens with a look at political economy and Queen's in the context of the New University, tracing the evolving university and government careers of the four men. There follow chapters on the leading, competing ideas that entered their classrooms and offices. The author concludes with a compelling discussion of the historiography on liberal-democratic theory into which is woven an analysis of the intellectual legacy left by the four Queen's scholars: a Canadian vision of new liberalism. For research sources, Ferguson relies mainly on their published and accessible unpublished writings and correspondence.

The study will interest readers of *Histoire sociale – Social History* for at least two good reasons. For one thing, the research contributes to an expanding body of recent literature on the cultural and social reform environment that marked this country during the early twentieth century. Ferguson argues that Canada's